



## Unique Program for Disabled Adults Starts Seedlings, Grows Hope

Good Roots program trainees gathered together in Jackson County, Georgia, last October to learn about basil crop production. Their goal was to grow 500 organic basil plants and have them ready for sale by Christmas.

The Good Roots program links adults with disabilities to the local foods and community gardens movements by providing training on how to grow and sell vegetable, herb and flower seedlings. The program was started in 2013 by the Multiple Choices Center for Independent Living in Athens, Ga., with a \$48,300 Rural Business Development Grant from USDA Rural Development and support from other funding partners.

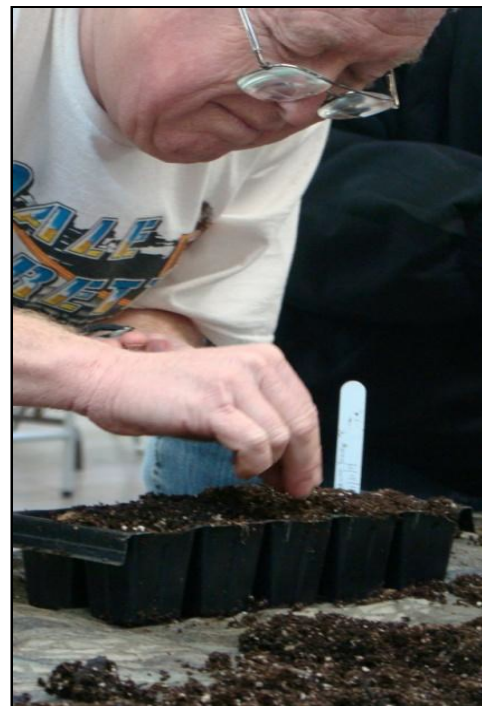
Good Roots is a unique micro-enterprise training and production program for people with disabilities. Using organic growing methods, participants learn the art and science of starting seedlings and logistics of developing their own small business, while contributing to their local communities through production and sale of high quality seedlings. Good Roots is providing individuals with disabilities throughout rural north-east Georgia with the tools and resources they need to start and grow small businesses.

After the seeds are sown in cell packs, the trainees learn how to germinate the seeds under home-grow light systems and in the Good Roots grow room. Once the seedlings are grown to garden-ready size, they are sold on-site, at local farmers markets and other venues, and on the Athens Locally Grown website. Good Roots participants also fulfill custom orders for seedlings from farmers and local gardeners.

A \$38,396 USDA Rural Business Development Grant awarded in August 2015 will assist Multiple Choices to develop additional strategies for workforce development, expand market opportunities and develop a seedling monitoring system for the home-grow light systems that will improve quality controls and efficiency.

“Many people with disabilities are trapped at home and are isolated from their communities, especially in rural areas,” Doug Hatch, Good Roots Founder and Co-Director said. “Good Roots is a way for such individuals not only to directly contribute to the well-being of their family and friends but to also provide a valued contribution to their community.”

The trainees who started growing basil last October are on track to sell their seedlings at outlets across Jackson, Clarke, Elbert, Green, Madison and Oglethorpe counties this month.



*Good Roots micro-enterprise program grower sows seeds and hope.*

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<b>Obligation Amount:</b>	\$38,396 Grant FY2015	\$48,312 Grant FY2013
<b>Date of Obligation:</b>	August 12, 2015	August 2013
<b>Congressional District:</b>	Representative Collins, District 9 and Hice, District 10; Senators Isakson and Purdue	
<b>Partners:</b>	Athens Land Trust, Inc.; East Athens Development Corporation, Inc.; Jackson EMC and Private Donations	
<b>Demographics:</b>	Clarke, Elbert, Greene, Jackson, Madison, Oglethorpe Counties	
<b>Impact:</b>	Providing isolated individuals opportunity and independent living skills through micro-enterprise training, support, equipment and supplies.	

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